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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HB 1097**

**Brief Description:** Regarding special assessments for conservation district activities and programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kirby and Chase.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Eliminates language that refers to county population numbers and names King Conservation District, Pierce Conservation District, and Spokane County Conservation District as the districts that may have a maximum annual per parcel rate of \$10.
- Requires money to be spent in conservation districts on programs to conserve natural resources, including soil and water.

**Hearing Date:** 1/20/09

**Staff:** Jaclyn Ford (786-7339)

**Background:**

Conservation districts are authorized to engage in a variety of natural resource conservation activities, including the conservation of soil and water. In 1989, the Legislature authorized a process through which county legislative authorities could generate funds to finance conservation district activities by establishing a system of special assessments on lands located within the district.

By August prior to the year assessments are proposed to begin, conservation district supervisors conduct a public hearing on the proposed system of assessments. After the public hearing, the supervisors can file the proposed system of assessments and a budget with the county legislative authority. The county must then hold a public hearing on the proposal, find that the public

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interest will be served, and determine that the special assessments will not exceed the benefit the land will receive from the district activities. The county may accept or revise the proposed system of assessments and once agreed to, must post notice as specified in statute.

The system of assessments will include a classification of lands, an annual per acre rate of assessment for each classification, and the total assessment proposed. Lands that will not receive benefit are to be classified separately and are not subject to the assessment.

The maximum annual rate of special assessments is 10 cents per acre, \$5 per parcel, or both. However, counties with more than 1.5 million residents may have a maximum annual per parcel rate of \$10. Currently, only King County has more than 1.5 million residents.

Special assessments may be imposed for up to 10 years. They are spread by the county assessor separately on the tax rolls, and are collected along with property taxes by the county treasurer. The county treasurer deducts a specified amount established by the county legislative authority for the county's costs in spreading and collecting the assessment.

**Summary of Bill:**

King Conservation District, Pierce Conservation District, and Spokane County Conservation District are named as the districts that may have a maximum annual per parcel rate of \$10.

After the county treasurer deducts the amount from the collected special assessments to cover the costs incurred by the county assessor and county treasurer, the remaining funds must be used by the conservation district on programs to conserve natural resources, including soil and water.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.